

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS OVERSIGHT HEARING REGARDING
“U.S. MILITARY BUILDUP ON GUAM AND CHALLENGES FACING THE COMMUNITY”
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES LECTURE HALL,
UNIVERSITY OF GUAM, MANGILAO
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Madam Chairwoman, thank you for agreeing to hold this very important hearing today on Guam about the impending military build-up for our island. As you know this hearing is very important to us – to my constituents – as it is the first Congressional hearing to be held on Guam in 24 years. It has been my firm belief that the military build-up on Guam will offer our community a unique opportunity to grow our economy and to improve our public works and infrastructure.

The 2005 Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy (IGPBS) from the Overseas Basing Commission, which was chartered by Congress, laid the groundwork for the rebasing of roughly 8,000 Marines from the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force to Guam from Okinawa, Japan. The Overseas Basing Commission report reaffirmed the strategic importance of Guam in the region. By placing United States Armed Forces on Guam it affords the Department of Defense the flexibility and freedom of action to respond to regional threats and crises, while providing our island and our people additional security in the face of rising global threats.

This very point of the strategic value of Guam has been underscored in Washington before Congress by many defense analysts and leaders, including our immediate previous Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, who traveled to Guam in 2003, to review for himself the opportunities for and value of placing additional assets and personnel on our military bases. The strategic value of Guam was also emphasized by Governor Camacho, the Guam Chamber of Commerce, and myself, before the Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC) Commission in 2005. And the recognition of the strategic value of Guam is a key reason why we now see renewed interest and investment from DoD in our military bases. I continue to believe and maintain that the BRAC closures in the 1990s were a mistake, including the closure of the Ship Repair Facility (SRF), the Public Works Center (PWC), the redeployment of ships and aircraft that were based here, and the downsizing of the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station Pacific (NCTAMS).

The Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, has declared 2007 to be the “Year of the Pacific.” The United States is increasingly focusing on efforts in our region to increase stability, good governance and economic development through closer political, economic and cultural ties to our neighbors. Our island is central to these efforts.

All of this has laid a foundation for a renewed bilateral defense alliance with our friend and ally, Japan, which has moved Guam into a unique and high-level focus inside the Pentagon.

Secretary Rumsfeld reminded me on several occasions that the U.S. military “goes where we are wanted.” Such sentiment is particularly relevant to the build-up for Guam. I have consistently maintained throughout my public career that the partnership we enjoy here on Guam with the U.S. military is beneficial to us overall and represents a key area, which through mutual respect and cooperation, we have and can continue to grow our economy. My belief in this regard has only grown stronger over the years and been reinforced with the opportunities presented before us with this build-up.

Although the size of the military build-up is substantial in terms of investment needed for infrastructure, the total number of military personnel that will be moving to our island is roughly the same as the total numbers of military personnel that were stationed on Guam during the 1980s and early 1990s. In fact, the realignment of the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force is a homecoming for the same division of Marines that liberated our island from enemy occupation 63 years ago. The Marines are returning to a community that respect and appreciate their selfless dedication and heroism. Many of our own sons and daughters have served and continue to serve proudly and honorably in the United States Armed Forces today. We welcome this move just as we would expect other communities to welcome our sons and daughters on the bases in their communities.

The United States Marine Corps and the Navy have had a long and storied history on Guam. It is this history that bonds our island community and our partners in the military together. The military build-up signals the beginning of a new chapter in the partnership between the residents of Guam and the United States Armed Forces.

Beyond the historic symbolism of the move, the military build-up offers both our community and the federal government a unique opportunity to coordinate local and federal resources to improve the overall infrastructure on our island – which is key to our economic growth and achieving an overall better quality of life for our families and military service personnel on Guam. Moreover, the defense alliance and agreement with the Government of Japan will bring about increased military cooperation and training exercises on Guam. Guam welcomes these exercises that further strengthen this strategic partnership. Operation Valiant Shield is evidence of the growing interest in hosting multilateral training exercises from Guam. These exercises translate into security for our island and the region, and into jobs and earnings for our businesses, that will increase government revenues and enable infrastructure improvements.

Moreover, even before the build-up begins in earnest we are seeing the early fruits of economic prosperity. Media reports have shown that property values have risen by 300% over the past year. Rising property values mean equity for the residents of Guam – and that translates into wealth. A well planned, integrated and coordinated master plan for the build-up will ensure that all of our residents can benefit from future economic opportunities that will improve their quality of life without sacrificing our heritage and culture.

The build-up also offers other areas for improving our quality of life. The increased military presence stands to bring about better veterans' services. Two weeks ago, the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs announced the approval of a \$5.4 million Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) to provide veterans' on Guam with access to a modern health care facility. This announcement is indicative of new services on the way for our veterans. Also, we can expect that there will be increased medical expertise at the Naval Hospital with growth in our island's population. Residents of Guam will benefit from the increase of medical expertise on-island. I encourage the Department of Defense and the Government to Guam to review areas for increased cooperation between Naval Hospital and Guam Memorial Hospital (GMH) in light of the build-up.

These opportunities will only come to fruition if local, federal and military leaders cooperate and integrate their planning. The military build-up on Guam has been described as difficult, unique, impossible, and doomed for failure. I would beg to differ with such characterizations. Instead, I believe the military build-up presents our community with opportunities we would be foolish to ignore. Yet, we would also be foolish to underestimate the challenges it presents. There is no question that we face many challenges, but I think all of us would prefer to be facing these challenges that are associated with growth, rather than facing challenges associated with decline. We must be honest with ourselves and each other in this process. I prefer to be optimistic, but realistic. We must keep things in perspective if we are to succeed.

The announcements and initial planning to date have generated senses of elation, anger, anxiety, and trepidation. Some view the build-up from a broad and balanced perspective; others are concerned with certain angles and elements given their roles and standing in the community, past experiences, or education and professional background.

This hearing, and the dialogue that will be continued after today, is meant to capture a wide range of views and concerns. Three panels have been organized today with witnesses representing a broad cross-section of our community. This hearing marks the beginning of our dialogue, and will lay the foundation for a Congressional record on the build-up with focus on the civilian community and the concerns of our people.

As Senator Pangelinan has stated, this build-up is an unprecedented move that we cannot afford to have addressed in a precedented way. It is an opportunity for the federal government and the Government of Guam to develop together innovative solutions to the challenges it presents.

Since the establishment of a Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the Department of Defense has been moving towards the creation of a truly "joint" or "Total Force" concept for all military forces. The Department of Defense has – with the Guam build-up – the unique opportunity to trail blaze a new era in the management of complex projects and to further its "jointness" approach beyond simply its own services. At the end of the day, the build-up of forces on Guam should be held as the example of how interagency cooperation and integration with civilian authorities can lead to successful outcomes. Cooperation and integration are critical to ensuring that the challenges surrounding the build-up can be

overcome with innovative and forward-thinking solutions. A “jointness” approach should be adopted by the Department of Defense with the Government of Guam.

Allow me to touch upon a few of the challenges that I know will be discussed by our witnesses today.

One challenge that has been identified is availability of sufficient human capital for projects. The fiscal year 2008 budget could contain up to \$345 million in military construction alone. To put that figure in perspective, the Department of Defense estimates that the on-island capacity for all construction is about \$400 million. By fiscal year 2010, we are told initial plans call for an increase in military construction to approach \$2.5 billion dollars for this build-up to work – a seven fold increase over fiscal year 2008 funding.

We will have to continue working together to ensure that our workforce currently on Guam is provided with adequate training opportunities in order to take advantage of skilled labor jobs that become available as a result of the build-up. That is why Chairwoman Christensen and I visited Guam Community College (GCC) last week. We need to exhaust this option before we earnestly discuss access to human capital beyond our borders.

Another challenge that has been raised is the capacity of our port. The port has to prepare for the increase in shipping traffic, possibly as much as a 70% increase within four years. I have consulted with Governor Camacho and federal officials about the port, and I am confident that the port will be able to adapt and make the necessary improvements that we need if cooperation begins today. Our community has to find consensus on the issue of port expansion and policy makers have to really consider what the future of the port will be.

Finally, while the build-up will provide a better quality of life and economic opportunity for residents of Guam we cannot sacrifice the beauty and ecological integrity of our island. Earlier this year the Department of Defense commenced scoping meetings for the environmental impact statement or the EIS. As General Bice will testify, the next step is to have the military do a more comprehensive analysis of the environmental impacts that the build-up will bring for our island. The EIS may take two to three years to complete and I assure you that the wait will be worth it. A thorough analysis of all opportunities for improving infrastructure must be looked at and addressed in the final EIS document. In keeping with our promise to be innovative and forward-thinking, I hope that an EIS and master plan will take into account opportunities for development of “green” infrastructure. In all cases where it is feasible we should be trying to build environmentally friendly and sensitive projects. I support the process and approach that the Department of Defense has adopted in this early stage of planning. A single, comprehensive EIS for the build-up best ensures that our community has the opportunity to comment on all aspects of the planning, and that it compels the Department of Defense to render a balanced assessment of the impacts for our community and our environment.

I urge the Department of Defense to continue strong public dialogue in this process, and to agree to reasonable compensatory mitigation in the event of adverse impacts.

A project of this magnitude does not come without its share of considerable challenges. However, I believe that our challenges will lead to progress. I am optimistic that we can overcome these challenges, but I recognize that our goals must remain realistic as we move forward. The people of Guam have faced countless challenges over the course of history and have overcome these challenges time and time again.

Our hearing today marks the beginning of our oversight role in Congress on the military build-up. It was important to hold our first such oversight hearing right here on Guam so that all of our citizens can listen to the concerns, ideas and solutions proposed by various local and federal leaders involved with the military build-up. Federal officials should be honest and direct in responding to Congress and to the Government of Guam on this project. I have confidence in the federal leaders that we will hear from today, and I have confidence in the talents and potential of our own community. Our role in Congress will continue to be to hold officials accountable in this process and to ensure that all levels of government and civilian private-sector leaders are working together for the betterment of all residents. I am here as the representative of all the people of Guam, and I am willing and ready to do my part to assist our leaders in working with the federal government. I want to commend Deputy Assistant Secretary David Cohen, in cooperation with General David Bice and the Joint Guam Program Office, for beginning an interagency dialogue with federal partners and the Government of Guam.

It is time to get serious about the planning. There will be no blank check written to the Department of Defense or the Government of Guam. There is no magic wand that either the federal government or the Government of Guam can wave to solve these challenges. Success will be brought by planning and prioritization. We must fully take advantage of and utilize existing federal programs and mechanisms to meet identified needs. This is where partnership becomes the critical link to making this build-up work for all of us.

Again, I thank Chairwoman Christensen for holding this hearing and I look forward to all of the witnesses' testimony.